

Is The United States A Christian Nation? (Part 1)

The Founders and Biblical Principles

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All of these messages, especially this one, are going to contain a great deal of basic foundational truth, but in a somewhat different context than normal. It is important to those of us who believe that our nation is the end-time part of the nation of Israel.

Very near to the beginning of the Church of the Great God, I gave a series of sermons on government because discontent regarding government was one of the major issues that drove the Worldwide Church of God apart.

I wanted to establish our understanding, and I think that at least that much was accomplished in that series. However, I never felt my picture was as complete then as it could have been, and I still do not, even to this day. I felt satisfied that the general form I described was biblically correct, but at the same time I knew that some parts of the overall picture were lacking in some areas. I think I know now better what was lacking.

This sermon has two related subjects running through it, and one has to do with a widely-held American belief. The second regards personal belief, every responsibility in relation to that widely-held American belief, and I think that I can work these two subjects together.

In light of the recent election, I am going to begin a subject today I am sure would be controversial in some circles of American churchianity, especially in the Evangelical wing of Protestantism. Evangelicalism is a division of the Christian churches that reacted most strongly to the removal of God and prayer from public schools, in addition to the virtual removal of the Ten Commandments from public legal life as well.

They take it that these traditional practices have been removed from the public life for the very reason that they are to be held vital to the Judeo-Christian faith. In other words, they believe that this is a direct attack, a persecution by secularism against Christianity itself.

On the other hand, many, if not most legal experts, hold that the American government should not support one religion above any other, and that prayer to a Christian God and the use of the Ten Commandments is basic to that religion only. They hold that this violates the "separation of church and state" principle that they draw from the Constitution. One of the major problems though is that the Constitution makes no direct statement regarding separation of church and state. It is only inferred.

One of the arguments the Evangelicals use to support their position is that God's was manifested in the settling, conquest, and founding of America as a Christian nation right from the beginning. Part of their justification is that these traditions were established by people emigrating from Europe who professed the Christian faith.

Now many immigrants came here purposely because they wanted the freedom to *practice* Christianity. In addition, the Evangelicals hold that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, by virtue of so many principles being lifted from the Bible almost wholesale, whether

directly or indirectly, to them clearly establishes the United States as a Christian nation. They cite many statements to support their argument from men such as George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, and many other founders who *they* say were Christians, or at least stated they believed in God or in the Bible as God's word. However, God, through Moses, makes an interesting statement that should modify that belief somewhat.

Deuteronomy 32:7-8 Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you; when the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel.

I think that you can begin to see at least a shadow there that Moses is not talking just about Israel, but when he uses the term "nations" he uses the term "Gentile," and he is including nations *besides* Israel that God settled where He wanted them.

Let us go to Acts 17 and we will see a repetition of this, only this time it is the Apostle Paul.

Acts 17:26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,

God settled people where He wanted, and we know that from time to time He *moved* the people in those nations to other areas even as He moved the Israelites from where *they* began, to other places on Earth. In other words, Israel was not the only nation God resettled in other areas of the Earth.

Both Paul and Moses were expounding God's sovereignty over all nations and that God has done similar things for non-Israelitish families of people. In other words, God has moved entire populations of non-Israelitish people at various periods of history as He saw fit. Therefore, if God was truly moving to establish a Christian nation in America as it was being founded, is a question that needs to be considered. The key there is "as a Christian nation."

Also consider that even if those who settled America were Israelites, this is no guarantee whatever that those Israelites were Christian. To me, looking at the Evangelicals' argument from the Bible's perspective, what Moses said in Deuteronomy 32 and what Paul said in Acts 17 weakens their argument considerably. Did ancient Israel ever truly become God's nation in the sense that they were obeying Him? Did He use them? Did He make a covenant with them? Yes He did. But did they keep their portion of the covenant that would make them God's representative as *He* saw fit? We know that they did not. Not ever.

I am going to provide you with some quotes from which I think you will clearly see what the intent of our Founding Fathers was regarding religion as they were forming first the Declaration of Independence and then the Constitution. So what was their idea?

This first quote is going to come from the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. The civil right provisions of the Northwest Ordinance foreshadowed the Bill of Rights portion of the Constitution. It was the Northwest Ordinance which said, "Religion, morality, and knowledge are necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind; schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." It was that thought which the Founders inserted into the Bill of Rights.

I think that we shall see that this clearly opens the door for the individual States to teach these subjects in their public schools, but it needs to be defined. It is just a very general statement, and it needs to be defined. The first thing we are going to do is define these three-subject areas that they mention: (1) religion, (2) morality, and (3) knowledge, and what they thought about those things in relation to the Constitution.

I am going to give definitions for these three. You cannot look them up in any one dictionary because I looked at quite a number of dictionaries, and I compiled them all together in this statement. They come from several sources.

(1) **Religion** is defined as a fundamental system, a body of beliefs concerning man's origin and relationship to the cosmic universe as well as his relationship with his fellow man.

In brief, the term "religion" defines a way of life worshippers strive to adhere to.

(2) **Morality** may be described as a standard of behavior distinguishing right from wrong.

(3) **Knowledge** is an intellectual awareness, an understanding of established fact relating to any field of human experience and inquiry.

For example, we inquire into history. We inquire into mathematics, into geography, into science, so it is an intellectual awareness, an understanding of things pertaining to these and other subjects as well.

When we put this together, thinking of the Constitution in relation to these three areas that they definitely wanted to be part of American life, the Constitution itself declares its encouragement of the teaching of religion and morality in the public schools for the purpose of promoting good government and happiness within the nation these men were forming.

That one statement is very important, that the reason they put this in the Constitution was to promote good government, good civic behavior, but they had no particular religion in mind. It is just that they recognized you could not have good government, you could not have good community relationships, you could not have a good community life and happiness without religion and morality.

What this means then is that the encouragement and the permission given in the Constitution is quite broad. It still needs more explanation to more specifically define what the framers of the Constitution had in mind, especially regarding religion and morality. In other words, we need more definition yet if we are going to determine whether America was ever a Christian nation.

What we are going to do now is look at some more sources drawn from the founders as to what they more specifically believed in regard to religion and morality. The following quote is going to come from George Washington. It is drawn from his farewell address following his second term in office as our first president. He stated a number of things on these subjects. Please understand that these quotes are excerpts. They are not all drawn from the same paragraph from that speech.

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports, and let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion.

Boy! He hit the nail right on the head there!

This next quote is still from George Washington.

Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail to the exclusion of religious principles.

He hit the nail right on the head again. The final line from his speech says:

It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government.

George Washington was a pretty wise man. He made these statements in March of 1796 after hearing how the promoters of atheism and amorality had seized control in France. The French Revolution took place in 1789. They stormed the Bastille. You probably read of it. But following that storming of the Bastille and their side winning, they turned that revolution into a shocking bloodbath of excesses of violence. The guillotine was kept working night and day as they were separating peoples' heads from their bodies in the wake of that revolution.

George Washington, hearing of this, felt that this was amoral to an extent he did not want to see anything like this occur in America, thus what he said in his farewell address: "Do not let this happen." You see, he came to the positive side of religion and morality, but he was still very general. He defined nothing except to show the importance of both of them to a prosperous, political, and community life.

The next quote is going to be from Thomas Jefferson. This is quite an interesting statement, because apparently his wisdom was sought by the State of Virginia regarding school and the subjects that were going to be taught in elementary school. Upon reading what was already gathered together, he stated the following:

No religious reading, instruction, or exercise shall be prescribed or practiced inconsistent with the tenets of any religious sect or denomination.

What he said was this. He was not against religion being taught. He just wanted to make sure that no specific religious teaching that pertains to only one religion be taught.

Listen to this one now from Benjamin Franklin. In a way it is the keystone. He was kind of looked to as the wise old man, and his counsel was sought on many things. Listen to what he said regarding this issue.

Here is my creed. I believe in one God, the Creator of the universe, that He governs it by His providence, and that He ought to be worshipped, that the most acceptable service we can render to Him is in doing good to His other children, that the soul of man is immortal and will be treated with justice in another life, respecting his conduct in this [his life]. I take these to be fundamental points of all sound religion.

In one sense, for the purpose of this sermon, the phrase—"I take these to be the fundamental points of all sound religion"—might be the most important thing he said. The key part of his creed for us then is that last statement. The reason this is important to us is that these five points run through the Founding Fathers' writings on this subject of religion and good government.

These basic beliefs, which constitute the religion of America, are the religion of all mankind.

That is in agreement with what Benjamin Franklin said. All sound religion has these points within it.

This next quote is taken from what appeared in a letter from John Adams to Thomas Jefferson. John Adams called these same tenets "the general principles on which the American civilization is founded."

I have one more quote, and this is from Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Joseph Story. He stated this in a decision he rendered in 1858, because apparently there was religious controversy going on over the Constitution and what it said regarding the teaching of religion. This is a rather long quote.

In some states Episcopalians constituted the predominant sect. In others, Presbyterians. In others, Congregationalists. In others, Quakers, and in others again there was a close numerical rivalry among contending sects. It was impossible that there should not arise perpetual strife and perpetual jealousy on the subject of ecclesiastical ascendancy if the national government were left free to create a religious establishment. The only security was in extirpating the power. But this alone would have been an imperfect security if we had not been followed by a declaration of the right of the free exercise of religion and a prohibition of all religious *tests*. Thus, the whole power over the subject of religion is left exclusive to the State governments to be acted upon according to their own sense of justice and the State Constitution.

What he decided was the Federal Government has no Constitutional right to impose *any* specific denomination's doctrinal regulations. This is why the First Amendment of the Constitution provides that "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

What they did is they went right down the middle on this issue. Apparently it was a pretty hot issue that they argued a great deal over, because each man wanted his denomination to be the top dog. What they finally concluded was that the only way it would be absolutely fair, since people were from many, many different denominations taking up residence in the United States of America, they would promote religion and morality to be taught in school, but no denomination's doctrinal approach to any one of them was to be permitted over anybody else's. In other words, it had to be even-handed and taught in areas in which everybody agreed. That is pretty hard in itself.

The founders were apparently unanimously in favor of religious instruction being given in public schools, but at the same time the instruction was limited to doctrines of broad agreement in order that no national religion could be established. And so what Justice Story did was throw it back to the States, saying, "Let them decide." In other words, it should be decided on a more local issue what was to be done.

I have no doubt about the sincerity of our nation's Founding Fathers' faith or their statements regarding their beliefs; but do their beliefs, statements, and works as political, economic, or military figures make the United States a Christian nation right from the formation?

Already you have enough information just from what I have given you in these quotes from those men that they had no intention of establishing the United States as a Christian nation. Religion they

wanted, but they wanted no dominant religious group given permission in the Constitution or in the Declaration of Independence over any other religion. But they did want morality to be taught. They wanted religion to be taught, because it was good for the nation.

Let us go to the New Testament to Romans, chapter 8.

Romans 8:8-9 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Romans 8:13-14 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

In the Bible's own words, here in Romans 8, we are defining what a Christian is. So proclamations of belief in Jesus Christ as Savior, or belief in the Bible as the word of God, or belief in keeping broad Christian doctrines like the Ten Commandments do not a Christian make.

Are not religious people distinguished from one another by their conduct? And are not those of evil conduct so separated from others by being isolated in a prison? In the same manner, so should Christians also be distinguished and separated from others by their works.

With these verses we are taking this sermon into another area to prove that the United States has never been a Christian nation. I think we have already shown that it was not the Founding Fathers' intention that the United States be designated as a Christian nation. They wanted morality taught. They wanted religion taught. They had encouraged the States to do this in their schools, but they were restricted in that no particular denomination, no particular group calling themselves "Christian" would become the national religion.

We are going to continue to examine this area that proves that we have never been a Christian nation on the basis of our conduct. We just saw those verses in Romans 8:13-14. Now we are going to go to Matthew 7:20-24.

Matthew 7:20-24 Therefore by their fruits you will know them. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Just with those couple of verses, coupled with the other ones given previously, not for one moment was the United States ever a Christian nation even though its founders strongly believed in the tenets of the Christian religion. It is our nation's collective works that prove this fact. What I am saying, then, is that our national conduct clearly reveals that the United States has never at any time been a Christian nation, despite the fervent claims of some.

From here we are going to go to the book of Ephesians, chapter 5, verses 1 and 2.

Ephesians 5:1-2 Therefore be imitators [followers] of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

We will pick up that principle that we are to follow Christ. We are going to go now to I Corinthians 11:1 for confirmation.

I Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me [follow me], just as I also imitate [or follow] Christ.

Let us begin with a simple basic premise. Is not a Christian one who is a follower of Jesus Christ? Do not followers conduct their lives the same as the one they are following? A Christian then must be identified not only by what he professes to believe, but also by how he lives his life, submitting to God as Christ did. If this is not true, then what does it mean to be a Christian? I think that you can clearly see that people in America are truly confused about what a Christian is, because Christianity is shattered in the United States into a thousand points of view.

Again, listen to this evidence. Are there not a thousand or so separated denominations, all believing somewhat different doctrines, and therefore practicing somewhat differently, and yet they all call themselves Christian? In fact some of these "Christian" groups have bitterly persecuted others who *also* call themselves "Christian."

Are there not Catholic, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist, Church of Christ, Seventh-Day Adventists members who all claim they are Christian? Yet they do not believe and follow Christ in the same way. They all disagree with the One they claim they are following. I do not think I need to go into that too deeply, but you know what I am saying is true. Christ kept the Sabbath. That is so clear. The Apostle Paul kept the Sabbath.

How many of those groups I just named keep the Sabbath? You say the Seventh-Day Adventists. Okay. They have got one up on the others, and good for them. They are at least following that, but they also keep Christmas. They also keep Easter. Did Christ ever keep any of them? So they are not really following Christ either.

Not only do they disagree with one religiously, they do not agree with one another politically either. Some of these people are Republicans. Some are Democrats. Others are Independent. Now what party do you believe Jesus—the One they claim to be followers of—would have supported in this recent election? Would they not want to do the same thing that Jesus did? And yet you see that even politically the difference in religion also has an effect on what they believe politically. This is important in regards to the Evangelicals especially, and also important to the Catholics.

Catholic priests are beginning to tell their parishioners that they cannot take communion any longer if they voted for Barack Obama, because he believes in killing babies. That is breaking the commandment: "You shall not murder." How can you take communion, as they would say, and support a man who does that? You see, they are beginning to show very clearly that they do not believe the same thing religiously. They do not believe the same thing politically either. So what party do you believe Christ would have supported? Not just the man, but the party as well? He would not have supported any of them.

Turn now to Matthew 6:33 which tells us what a Christian is supposed to do. This is a command from Christ.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Evangelicals overwhelmingly supported John McCain and Sarah Palin. I might also add that they supported George Bush II, Robert Dole, George Bush I, and Ronald Reagan in previous elections. Do you think that Jesus would have supported those men *with* the Evangelicals?

Is it possible that these people are deluded, and thus confusing the Kingdom of God with the kingdom of this world, and as a result of their religious beliefs, political beliefs, and national identity beliefs, all of these are a part of a confused (and we will give them the shadow of the doubt) unintended idolatry? Do you see what I am getting at here? They are blending together religion and politics, and the one flows into the other. That would be idolatry if Jesus is supporting any of them.

For many Evangelicals, it seems as though their fervor about the Kingdom of God is about "taking America back to God," as they might say. But in reality, what has happened is that their religion has become a confused mixture polluted with political ideals, and I might also add agendas to that as well, because it is part of those political ideals. The agendas stick right in, and thus they give their financial support. They give of their time and energies working for candidates who are anti-abortion, getting prayer back in schools, and the Ten Commandments displayed in public places. In other words, they support political candidates that agree with their religious beliefs.

We are now going to go to I Corinthians, and there is a statement here by the Apostle Paul that is important in this regard. You will recognize it right away.

I Corinthians 1:13-14 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

I Corinthians 1:12 Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."

That is idolatry. These people, regardless of which denomination they are part of (and I am focusing mostly on the Evangelicals), show very clearly, because of which political party and which candidate they support, that Christ is divided, because they do not all support the same party or the same candidate. Now the Evangelicals do it most loudly and maybe the Catholics after them.

We are looking at a blending of false religion with a human government, and that is idolatry, because that human government is not the Kingdom of God. We are to seek first the Kingdom of God, and there is nothing in the Bible that gives any Christian the permission to support any political party or any candidate. If we do that, it separates us from Christ. **He is our King!** We already *have* a Ruler.

The concept that America is a Christian nation from its foundation has a very strong tendency to intensify even normal patriotism through assuming that God is on the American side, and therefore our causes and our wars are righteous and just. When German Catholics and Lutherans fought against American Catholics and Lutherans, whose side was Jesus on? Both sides sincerely believed that they were worshipping Jesus Christ, yet they were so divided that they were shooting and killing one another. It is incredible!

And yet, in the face of these things, these people can sincerely say and believe that the United States is a Christian nation and has been such from its beginning when there is absolutely no truth anywhere given in the scriptures that would allow that to be part of their belief system. So it becomes an idolatry to them. They are not worshipping Christ. They are in reality worshipping a kingdom of this world.

Right now this peculiar belief is even more intensified because from both within this nation (from contrary secular legal and political forces) and from without (from Islam), they believe that Christianity is being seriously threatened. At the same time, America is becoming increasingly divided by illegal immigration; mainstream Protestant Christianity is losing its force. These forces are pressuring Evangelicals, who are very sincere, into becoming increasingly defensive and combative, believing that they stand alone in a pagan world. I have no doubt at all about these peoples' sincerity, but they are wrong as wrong can be.

Mark 1:14-15 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

When Jesus came and He preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God, He clearly revealed to the called-out ones that the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world, including Israel, are two vastly different entities that the Bible reveals are, in reality, spiritual enemies. If a so called Christian is fighting on the side of a kingdom of this world, he has actually put himself *against* Christ, making himself *anti*-Christ, again furthering the concept that what we are looking at here is a modern American idolatry.

I want you to consider this. We are going to turn Luke 13:14, but time-wise we are going to shift back to the time of Christ in order to see this verse in its context. The principle is what I want here. Jesus said:

Luke 13:34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . .

Jerusalem was the capital city of the nation of Israel. It stands for, it represents, the entire nation as its capital.

Luke 13:34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!

Listen! Israel was the only nation God ever entered into a covenant with. If Israel was ever the Kingdom of God on earth, why would they continuously through the ages kill the very ones God sent to them for their good? **They were enemies of one another!** Jerusalem's behavior toward the prophets God sent is evidence of the enmity that existed between Israel and God, and thus even Israel, throughout its history, was not even a *type* of the Kingdom of God. In a broad way it is a type of the church in the world, but never a type of the Kingdom of God in the world.

Let us look at further proof of this. We are going to go to John 1:10-11.

John 1:10-11 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

The enmity gave evidence of itself in the rejection, in the non-acceptance of Jesus Christ, and the putting of Him to death. The Kingdom of God and the nation of Israel are enemies of each other. How could we ever be a Christian nation when we are designated right in God's word as His enemy?

Let us keep going forward. Turn to John 15, verses 18 and 19. Jesus again is the speaker.

John 15:18-19 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

How about that being proof? That is so plain. The world hates Jesus and His disciples. I am sure that what I am saying is proof that unless an Evangelical was humble, it would turn him inside out spiritually. They sincerely, but wrongly, believe that the United States from its inception was designated by God as a Christian nation, when, as a matter of fact, the Bible shows very clearly it has never been a Christian nation.

All the way back to the founding of Israel, the Israelites have been fighting against God. He calls them "stiffnecked," "hard-hearted." You do not say that to somebody who is yielding to you. He loved them. They rejected Him in return for the love that was given. He freed them from slavery, and so they rebelled against Him.

The United States of America has just continued what Israel did throughout its entire history. Once in a while they got turned around a bit when there was good leadership from a David, a Moses, an Aaron. Things were pretty good. They went along well because the people had somebody they respected and feared, because they knew God was with them (with David, Moses, Aaron). Israel does not know what a true Christian looks like anymore, or what he does. They do not even know who *they* are.

What does God tell the church we are to do about this enmity that exists between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of men, which is a kingdom of this world? You know the verses. Let us go back to Revelation 18, verse 4.

Revelation 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. "Come out." "Separate yourselves from the world," which here is referred to as "Babylon."

These are very familiar scriptures.

I John 2:14-15 I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one. Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Let us stop there just for a second. What does this say about identifying the Evangelicals as?

I John 2:16-17 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

So there we are warned not to permit ourselves to get sucked in by the world's appeals to our senses and to our intellect.

Now we are going to go to I Corinthians 5:9-10.

I Corinthians 5:9-10 I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people *of* this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go *out* of the world.

This thought here connects to what we just read in I John 2, and also in Revelation 18. A Christian is to be spiritually sanctified; that is, set apart from the world, but not physically so. Now He said, "Come out of her My people," and so Paul is defining here what it means to come out of the world. It means to be sanctified away from it spiritually, but he recognizes the fact that we have to rub shoulders with, to work with, and in one sense to pay attention to those who are *in* the world. That is why he says, "Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world."

We are to separate from them spiritually, not physically; not even to the extent of separation into isolated villages, and not like monks who went into abbeys. Check with him on those things. A Christian is not to do that. He is to still circulate within the community in which God called him. The Christian is to be distinguished, sanctified from the world by what he believes and evidence by what he practices as a result of his beliefs. How would the world ever receive a witness from a Christian if they all isolated themselves into little villages? You should not do that.

We are going to go to the book of Matthew, to chapter 13, verses 10 to 17. What we are going to begin to see here is why we can follow Christ and they cannot. God does not hold this against them in the way that He would hold it against us if we did something similar to what *they* do.

Matthew 13:10-11 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

A miracle has been worked on our minds. It is something that God, in His mercy, in His grace, did to us to enable us to grasp what Jesus Christ is teaching.

Matthew 13:12-17 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear

with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them." But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

So different are the called from the uncalled, it was as though Jesus was speaking to the uncalled in a foreign language. "Hearing you will hear, but not hear." They did not understand but a tiny percentage of the many words that He spoke.

We are going to go to John 6, verses 59 through 66. What we are seeing here is that Jesus spoke on this fairly frequently. I think He did it to keep us humble. He wanted to remind us that anything we have that is special to us is something that has been given to us. It is not something we have earned. It is part of God's grace.

John 6:59-66 These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

They left because they did not "get it." They did not "get it" because they were never called in the first place. They never had that miracle worked in their mind from above. Now to where do we translate this revelation from God's word in our day? Well, to these Evangelicals. They just do not get it because it has not been given to them to understand the right application of these principles that we are seeing.

What we are going to see here is that, like Jesus, the same kind of thing happened to the apostle Paul.

Acts 17:29-34 Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter." So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Do you know that they actually called Paul a "babbling" in that context? It does not show it in the way it was translated there, but they used the Greek word that means a "babbling." That is what the word of God sounded like to them—babbling. It was incomprehensible. Now to those called, God's truth is generally simple and straight-forward. This does not mean that the Christian always immediately gets every aspect of what he hears or reads, because some things *are* difficult, as Peter said of some of Paul's writings, but this world's way is always complex, twisting, vague, uncertain. It is always

flirting right along the edge of being chaotic. This is why God called this world "Babylon"—"confusion."

We just heard many of the campaign speeches or many excerpts from the campaign speeches. You have read bits and pieces of literature that you have gotten from the Internet. Who can you trust? Who can you trust from that system to truly be Christian?

Nothing distinguishes the difference between God's kingdom and this world more clearly than the contrast between the dominant approaches in the business of life. Those of you who heard Gilbert Boyer's sermonette maybe understood he was talking about authority—that all authority comes from God. There is legitimate authority and there is a *twisted* authority that man takes from what he believes comes from God. So man, not quite knowing what to do with God's word and how to apply it, applies it in a way that is, we will say, unique to man.

As a final thought, do not the kingdoms of this world seek to establish and advance their ideals and their agendas? Yes they do, but so does the Kingdom of God. Now on the surface there is nothing unusual at all about what either one of them does. The difference is how they accomplish and establish their ideals. That is decidedly different. That is about 180 degrees different, because the kingdoms of this world are driven by human nature, driven by the spirit of anti-Christ that all have unwittingly given themselves over to.

All of these governments seek to establish and advance their agenda by force. Every single government of this world is competitive and adversarial by nature, in some cases viciously so. They all rule by the "might makes right" principle.

Have you noticed how God symbolically reveals this? All the nations of the world are pictured, are portrayed, by animals of prey, seeking to devour, or at the very least trample under foot. They are depicted as lions, bears, charging goats, and combination of some vicious animals. Even Israel is similar. Judah is symbolized as a lion. That is hardly a domesticated pet.

Ephraim is the bull, and you do not want to get in the way when the bull is angry. Manasseh is the eagle—a vicious raptor. Dan is portrayed as a serpent, and the scriptures say "Benjamin shall raven as a wolf." Of the brothers Simeon and Levi, it says in the scriptures, "Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations." These two tribes were so violent that God gave them no homeland of their own within the Promised Land, but scattered their population through the rest of the family so that they could not congregate and intensify their power.

By way of contrast, what about the church—those people who are spiritually part of the Kingdom of God? How is it portrayed? As sheep—hardly a vicious animal. A sheep is a follower. The world imposes. Christ's brothers follow. The world uses force and power. Christ's followers submit. It is almost as if they do not have a vicious bone in their body. Our King is the Lamb of God. That is even less than a sheep, if we want to put it in terms of power as a man, and that is what we are. We are men—human beings.

Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God. He described Himself as "meek and lowly." Did He ever exercise His power, His gift, in order to forcefully impose His ideals and agendas? Did Jesus manipulate and control through threat? "You do this, or else!" What did Jesus do regarding power or His use of it on earth?

Matthew 26:52 But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

Jesus, as a man, did not believe that "might makes right."

Matthew 26:53-55 Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?" In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me.

Jesus exercised His powers by submitting to the Father. In His own words, He said in John 8:28-29: "I do *always* that which pleases Him." All He had to do was call on the Father and He would have had all of the power He would have wanted, but He controlled Himself and obeyed and submitted as He knew a Son of God should. He gave place to the Father and let Him do what *He* willed to do. And so His guiding principle all through life was "Not My will be done, but *Yours* be done." Human nature recognizes this as weakness, but it is the greatest power there is that exists in heaven and earth, because when one does that, the Father does the work, and there is nobody that is going to turn Him aside.

We will stop there, but we will pick up and go on because there is much more on this subject in the scriptures.